

Update on suspected food poisoning cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 22) provided an update on its investigation into two suspected food poisoning cases involving sandwiches announced yesterday (May 21), and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent food-borne diseases.

Subsequent to its follow-up investigation, the CHP has identified nine more clusters of suspected food poisoning relating to those sandwiches. The newly reported clusters involved five males and 15 females aged 1 to 68. They developed gastroenteritis symptoms including abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever about four to 43 hours after consuming the sandwiches between May 18 and 21. Among them, 16 sought medical consultation and five required hospitalisation.

All affected persons are now in stable condition. Investigations are proceeding.

"Prolonged storage of food at room temperature may allow pathogens to grow and produce toxins. Members of the public should avoid consuming cooked or ready-to-eat food that has been kept at room temperature for several hours," a spokesman for the CHP said.

To prevent food-borne diseases, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times. When dining out:

- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters, at a buffet;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hot pot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process;
- Use two sets of chopsticks and utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Do not patronise illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Do not try to use salt, vinegar, wine and wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.